

Southern California Weather Safety Tips

For more information about these and other hazards, visit: www.nws.noaa.gov/safety.html

Flash Floods

- Get out of areas subject to flooding, such as dips, low spots, canyons, washes, etc. Climb to higher ground.
- Do not let children play near storm drains.
- Avoid already flooded and high velocity flow areas. Do not attempt to cross flowing streams.
- If driving, be aware that the road bed may not be intact under flood waters. Turn around and go another way. Never drive through flooded roadways.
- If the vehicle stalls, leave it immediately and seek higher ground. Rapidly rising water may engulf the vehicle and its occupants and sweep them away.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams and washes, particularly during threatening conditions.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

Lightning

- Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are imminent. This is your best way to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- Move to a sturdy building or car. Do not take shelter in small sheds, under isolated trees, or in convertible automobiles. Stay away from tall objects such as towers, fences, telephone poles, and power lines.
- If lightning is occurring and a sturdy shelter is not available, get inside a hard top automobile and keep the windows up. Avoid touching any metal.
- Utility lines and metal pipes can conduct electricity. Unplug appliances not necessary for obtaining weather information. Avoid using the telephone or any electrical appliances. Use phones ONLY in an emergency.
- Do not take a bath or shower during a thunderstorm.
- Turn off air conditioners. Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage.

If caught outdoors and no shelter is nearby:

- Find a low spot away from trees, fences, and poles. Make sure the place you pick is not subject to flooding.
- If you are in the woods, take shelter under the shorter trees.
- If you feel your skin tingle or your hair stand on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. DO NOT lie down.

- If you are boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter immediately!

Tornadoes

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
- Stay away from windows.
- Get out of automobiles.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car; instead, leave it immediately for safe shelter.
- If caught outside or in a vehicle, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands.
- Be aware of flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes. You should leave a mobile home and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building or a storm shelter.

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

Outside:

- Find shelter to stay dry. Cover all exposed body parts.
- If no shelter, build a lean-to, windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind. Build a fire for heat and to attract attention. Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.
- Melt snow for drinking water. Eating snow will lower your body temperature.

In a Vehicle:

- Stay in the vehicle. You will become quickly disoriented in wind-driven snow and cold.
- Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat.
- Open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.
- Be visible to rescuers. Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
- Tie a colored cloth, preferably red, to your antenna or door.
- After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.
- Exercise. From time to time, move arms, legs, fingers and toes vigorously to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

Inside:

- Stay inside.
- When using alternate heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc., use fire safeguards

and properly ventilate.

- If no heat: close off unneeded rooms, stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors, cover windows at night. Eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration. Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration and subsequent chill.

Extreme Heat

- Slow down. Limit strenuous activities to the coolest time of the day.
- Dress for summer. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Reduce the consumption of proteins to slow down metabolism and water loss.
- Drink plenty of water even if you are not thirsty. Avoid alcoholic beverages.
- Spend more time in air-conditioned places.
- Avoid too much exposure to the sun. Sunburn reduces the body's ability to dissipate heat.

Boating

- Check NOAA Weather Radio for latest warnings and forecasts.
- Watch for signs of approaching storms: dark, threatening clouds that may foretell a squall or thunderstorm, a steady increase in wind or sea lightning flashes.
- An increase in wind opposite in direction to a strong tidal current may lead to steep waves capable of broaching a boat.
- Heavy static on your AM radio may be an indication of nearby thunderstorm activity.
- If a thunderstorm is approaching, head for shore if possible. Get out of your boat and away from the water. Find shelter immediately.
- If a thunderstorm catches you while afloat, remember that gusty winds and lightning pose a threat to safety. Put on your personal flotation device and prepare for rough seas. Stay below deck if possible. Keep away from metal objects that are not grounded to the boat's protection system. Don't touch more than one grounded object at the same time (or you may become a shortcut for electrical surges passing through the protection system).

Surf and Rip Currents

- Know how to swim.
- Always swim at guarded beaches and heed the beach patrol.
- Remain calm. If caught in a rip current remember it will not pull you under.
- Swim out of the current. Since the currents are relatively narrow, you can escape the flow by swimming parallel to the shore until you break free, then swim diagonally toward the shore.
- Float if you cannot swim out of the current. Float until it dissipates, then swim diagonally toward the shore or float and summon the beach patrol by waving your hands.
- Use a flotation device if you attempt to rescue someone.